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TWO DUELISTS.

[From All the Year Round.]

After the death of Count de Larillers there sprang up in Bordeaux a tribe of duelists, obstinately prepared to contest with each other the succession to that vacant post of infamy which the Count had for several years filled without a rival. Among these aspirants were two, more audacious and resolute than the rest, who eventually remained masters of the field of action, and for five years rivaled each other in effrontery and temerity, with the view of obtaining the coveted title of "first blade." In this strange kind of contest, in which each at times gave proofs of a laudable courage, they displayed no lack of artifice to impart to their more insolent provocations all the importance of a great scandal. One of the pair, an Italian by birth, but resident in France for a considerable time, and recently settled at Bordeaux, was the Marquis de Lignano, better known by the simple title of Marquis. He was rather above thirty-five years of age; of a small, thin, weakly figure, and with a repulsive, sickly-looking countenance. He was excessively nervous and petulant. The sound of his voice grated most disagreeably on the ear, and it was impossible to look at the man while he was speaking, with his head insolently thrown back, without conceiving a strong prejudice against him.

The Marquis handled his sword like no other skillful of fence; his lunges were lively, jerky, in fact, singularly rapid, and commonly mortal. He recognized but a single rival; only one foeman worthy of his steel. This was his intimate friend, M. Lucien Claveau, who for the moment shared his glory, but whom he hoped some day to kill, and so peaceably to enjoy the succession of the deceased Count de Larilier. The inhabitants of Bordeaux, victims of the turpitudes of this pair of assassins, on their part looked forward with interest to the contest which they knew to be inevitable, and the issue of which would be their certain deliverance from one or the other scourge. Meanwhile, the Marquis and Lucien Claveau seemed on the most intimate and agreeable terms.

One summer's evening, toward 7 o'clock, and at the moment when the inhabitants of Bordeaux turned out of doors to breathe the cool, refreshing air, at the close of some sultry day, the Marquis, accompanied by a couple of his creatures, took up a position in the Rue Sainte Catherine, at the corner of the gallery. The Marquis was elegantly dressed and delicately gloved, according to his habit, and carried in his hand a thin, flexible switch, with which he played like a man who is happy and contented with himself. From time to time, however, he showed signs of impatience, and, eventually, abruptly quitted his position at the angle of two streets, and going into the middle of the road, gazed for a minute or two in the direction of the Place de la Comedie. Evidently disappointed in his expectations, he returned to his two comrades, exchanged a few words with them, and resumed his scrutiny. After a few turns backward and forward, the Marquis again approached his acolytes, and said to them in an undertone:

"Now, pay particular attention; here comes my man."

The individual whom the Marquis styled his man was a distinguished looking personage, young, handsome and well dressed, and was engaged in humming a lively tune, while leisurely pursuing his way, apparently indifferent to everything around. He was much surprised when at a few yards from the corner of the street, our bully advanced toward him and saluted him with mock politeness. The young man stopped suddenly, but, before he had time to speak, the Marquis holding out a switch on a level with his knees, said to him:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but give yourself the trouble to jump over this."

The young man looked hard at his interrupter for a moment, then smiled and jumped over the switch, and still smiling went his way, fully believing the Marquis to be a lunatic. This mistake simply saved his life. The Marquis, on his part, stupified at the charming complacency of the young man in so readily acquiescing in his demand, became furious. His design had signally failed, and might fail a second and even a third time. Under any circumstances, all had to be gone through again, and as it was necessary that he should select his intended victim, he had to wait before he could renew his experiment.

At length the wished-for moment arrived. While the Marquis was looking toward the Place de la Comedie, he observed, some distance off, a young officer of the garrison advancing along the footpath. This time it was more than probable something serious would result, and the Marquis, therefore, made a sign to his friends, so that they might be prepared for any emergency. Each moment brought the officer nearer to these three scoundrels. He proved to be a young man about five and twenty years of age, who was already a captain, and consequently carried his head high. With his left hand resting on the hilt of his sword, he strolled along, with that easy carelessness which is the soldier's privilege under all circumstances.

When he had arrived within a few yards of the Marquis, the latter advanced toward him with his accustomed air of politeness, and holding out his switch as he had done before, repeated his invitation in these terms:

"Monsieur le Capitaine, be kind enough to jump over this switch."

The officer halted and haughtily surveyed the insolent individual before him from head to foot, at first without the slightest symptom of anger, but also without fear—in truth, he was not quite certain that he had not a madman to deal with. When the Marquis observed this temporary hesitation, he saw the officer was prepared to resist him, and believing he had found the man he wanted, drew himself up, and in a haughty tone ordered him to jump forthwith. Indignant at this insolent provocation, the officer thought the proper thing to do was to send the switch with a kick into the middle of the road, and then to soundly box the Marquis' ears. The latter on being struck more than once, danced about and stormed; and his rage prevented him from uttering a single intelligible word. Meanwhile his two accomplices endeavored to appease him, for a crowd had collected around. The young officer, who had not lost his composure for a moment, having given his address, prepared to elbow his way through the throng, seemingly utterly indifferent to the scrape in which he had thoughtlessly involved himself.

The following day, about 8 o'clock in the morning, the Marquis de Lignano and his two seconds repaired to a little wood in the commune of Pessac, quite close to Bordeaux, where they found their adversary of the night before, who had brought with him two officers and the doctor of his regiment. It had been arranged that the duel should be fought with the small sword, and on the part of the Marquis, it had been stipulated that slight wounds were not to count, and that the contest should only terminate when one of them had fallen. In short, enough blood was required to wipe out the injuries which the Marquis considered he had sustained.

According to the universally recognized code of the duel, from the moment when the seconds place the swords in the hands of the two adversaries, each combatant, no matter what may be the reason that has brought them face to face, is alike sacred against insult on the part of the other. The Marquis de Lignano, nevertheless, had the insolence to hold out his switch again in front of his adversary, and so say to him—

"Monsieur le Capitaine, there is yet time. Will you jump now?"

"Sir," replied the officer coldly, "he who insults his adversary on the ground is a contemptible scoundrel."

"You will not jump, then? Well, all the worse for you;" and with a rapid movement he drew his switch across the officer's face.

The Marquis' seconds laughed; as to the officer's seconds and the doctor, they reddened with indignation at having to do with such scum of society.

The two opponents took up their positions. The Marquis was a peculiar, but not a first-rate swordsman. In order, therefore, that he might finish off his adversary as quickly as possible, he sought to tire him during the first two or three minutes, harassing him with all manner of feints, until overcome with fatigue, he should lay himself open to an easy thrust. Watching his opportunity, the Marquis gave a terrible lunge, which drove his sword right through the unfortunate officer's body. The unhappy man reeled back on the grass. The doctor placed his hand upon his heart and found it had already ceased to beat.

The dead man's seconds overcome with grief, grasped his hand for the last time; they were both friends of his of long standing. One of them, kneeling down, was about to close the vacant eyes, when Lignona touched him on the shoulder and repeated in his ear the sinister words:

"Monsieur, will you jump?"

The latter looked for a moment at the Marquis, and without replying, seized the sword upon which the corpse of his friend had fallen, and at once placed himself in position. At the end of some seconds, during which the officer had shown much useless resolution, he received a sword thrust in the breast, and rolled expiring on the ground. He had, however, a few minutes yet to live.

The doctor quitted the dead man to hasten to the wounded one, and called the other second to his assistance, but Lignona, now grown infuriated, threw himself in the unhappy man's way, and was about to repeat his offensive proposal for the third time. He was, however, saved the trouble.

"I understand you," camly observed the officer, seizing his comrades sword and placing himself face to face with the terrible Marquis. Some seconds later he sank down in his blood.

Only the doctor now remained. Would any human being credit it, the bloodstained bully, brutal as he naturally was, was rendered positively fiendish by the intoxication of the slaughter which he had already perpetrated, and longed for more blood to shed? Addressing himself to the doctor in a tone of command, he required him to jump over the switch.

The doctor did not hesitate. He did what most other men would have done in his place. He jumped over the switch, and by so doing was able to continue his attention to two wounded men, and save the life of one of them.

The intimacy which existed between the Marquis de Lignano and Lucien Claveau, instead of growing weaker after the last sanguinary freak, seemed to constitute itself on an entirely new basis, and to assume the proportions of a sincere and lasting friendship, if one may dare thus to degrade the term. They were always seen together, rivetted, as it were, to the factitious attachment which they professed to feel for each other, like a couple of galley slaves united by the same chains. At last they took to inhabiting the same suit of rooms, as though each wanted to have the other constantly in reach. It would be difficult to explain friendship between two men as utterly opposed to each other on the score of birth, education and manners, for the Marquis de Lignano, spite of his misdeeds, had always kept up the outward appearance of a man born and brought up in good society, whereas Lucien Claveau was of obscure origin, brusque in manners, and deficient in education. His handsome face and muscular figure, were, moreover, strikingly in contrast with the Marquis' repulsive features and feeble frame. We have mentioned that the pair lived together in the same suit of apartments, but omitted to state that they occupied the same sleeping room, in which each had, of course, his separate bed.

One summer's morning, long after the hour at which the two friends usually quitted their bedroom, the man servant who waited upon them both, hearing nothing whatever of either of his masters, began to feel rather uneasy. His orders were never to disturb them, but always to wait until he was summoned. Accustomed to their irregular mode of life, he was not in the habit of sitting up for them of an evening; still he always knew, on entering the sitting-room the next day, either by some directions written in pencil, or by some clothes being placed there for him to brush, whether or not the two friends were at home. Now, on that morning he had found, according to custom, a short pencilled note, which proved that the pair had returned over night. How, then, was the continued silence in their bedroom to be accounted for? Like a good and faithful servant he had of course applied his ear to the door and his eye to the keyhole, and had, moreover, turned the handle and found the door to be locked on the inside. As the day advanced he grew alarmed, and proceeded to force the door. Entering the room on tiptoe, he felt somewhat reassured when, on leaning over each bed, he saw by the dim light which penetrated through the closed shutters, that his masters were, to all appearance, peacefully sleeping. He was about to retire as he had entered, with the greatest caution, when his foot struck against something that gave forth a ringing sound as it rolled along the floor. He had evidently kicked against a sword.

A frightful suspicion crossed the valet's mind. Without loosing a moment he groped his way to the window, threw open the shutters, and saw at a glance that the room was in a frightful state of disorder. Clothes were strewn about, furniture was overturned, candlesticks, vases and various knick-knacks scattered over the floor, while by the side of each bed was a sword, the bloody stains on which too clearly indicated that a desperate encounter, a horrible and deadly struggle had taken place between these men, who, as if in bitter derision of their miserable destiny, reposed side by side, like two brothers, under the same roof.

At the sight of all this havoc the valet uttered a terrific cry, on hearing which the Marquis and Lucien, both of whom had appeared dead, rose up, at the same instant, in their beds. Both were ghastly pale; their bloodstained shirts were torn to rags; their chests punctured with wounds; the right arm of one was dreadfully hacked, while the neck of the other showed a series of gashes sickening to contemplate. Spite, however, of the pain they were enduring; spite, too, of their weakness, and of the burning fever which consumed them, they preserved their sitting posture, glaring at each other out of their glassy-looking eyes, enfeebled it is true, but still not vanquished. So long as they had sufficient strength left them to injure, they would continue to defy each other with proud disdain.

They remained thus for several seconds. Suddenly Lucien Claveau, overcome by some painful impression, fell heavily back and gave vent to a loud sob. At this cry of despair the Marquis bounded on his bed as though he had been shot; a shrill, sinister laugh escaped from his thin, ghost-like lips. "Oh, you are crying, are you?" said he in a firm voice; "then you confess you are vanquished, and I can now pronounce you to be a coward."

At the word "coward" it was Lucien's turn to spring up, and the valet, sole witness of this frightful scene, had to keep him from throwing himself upon the Marquis. "I a coward!" cried Claveau, held firmly back by the servant, "a coward! Ah, I have committed my share of crimes; been guilty of countless follies, have possibly rendered many persons unhappy, but never has a living soul been entitled to say that Lucien Claveau was a coward, and feared to face danger, even though death might be the result. You, Marquis, are a far greater villain than I am, for you are incapable of repentance and impotent for good. A moment ago, when I was looking at you, covered with wounds, I forgot my own sufferings, of which you are the cause, and I forgave you, and felt a real pity for you, which found vent in the first tears I have shed for many years. And yet you laugh at me, and taunt me, and still dare to laugh at all I am saying. You are incapable of understanding a heart that can repent and forgive. Well, know that I again hate and despise you. You have styled me a coward, wounded as we both are, we have neither of us strength sufficient to hold a sword, still both of us ought not to remain alive. We are only a few paces distant from each other. Have you sufficient strength to hold a pistol?"

The Marquis made a movement and replied, "Ah, I understand you, a duel with pistols, and then we shall be done with each other. Joseph," said he, addressing the servant, who was pale with fright, "take these two pistols on the mantlepiece, load them before our eyes, and hand one to each of us, then give the signal; or better still," said he, turning with evident pain toward his adversary, "let us draw lots who shall blow the other's brains out."

"So be it," answered Claveau. "Joseph, you have heard what has passed; load one of the pistols."

Joseph made a pretense of going out to execute the order which he had received. No sooner, however, did he find himself on the other side of the bedroom door than he quietly locked it, and ran off to a doctor, into whose hands Lucien and the Marquis were compelled to resign themselves. Their cases required perfect quiet.

Lucien was conveyed by his friends to the house of a distant relative, a widow lady with seven children. Assisted by her eldest daughter, a kind, simple country girl, she attended him with so much care that Claveau recovered.

His heart was touched; he spoke of marriage, promising a thorough reformation of his former course of life; and he did marry. To enable him to withdraw himself completely from all association with his former companions, it was decided that he and his young wife should leave Bordeaux, if only for a time. But just before they left, chance brought them, in spite of all precautions, face to face with the Marquis de Lignano, who accosted Lucien, saying:

"I had heard that you were convalescent; but have always maintained the contrary, because, coward as I have pronounced you to be, I did not believe you coward enough to hide yourself behind a petticoat."

Lucien merely replying, "Never mind," passed on.

The Marquis followed, and again kissed his taunt into Lucien's ear.

The excitement consequent upon this meeting kept Lucien's wife awake that night, and next day she was too ill to leave her room. Her husband sat moodily by her bedside until the afternoon, when, finding that she had dozed off to sleep, he determined to go to Bordeaux and exact revenge. Chafing with anger, he hastened to the cafe which Lignano was in the habit of frequenting, rushed up the stairs, and disregarding the salutations of several of his old acquaintances, who advanced to greet him after his long absence, made straight for the table at which his enemy was seated. The Marquis immediately rose.

"Well, here I am," said Lucien, savagely, and hardly able to restrain himself from clutching Lignano by the throat.

"Pshaw!" said the Marquis, contemptuously, "Go back to your petticoat; you are too great a coward for my notice."

Lucien seized him by the coat collar with one hand and by the skirts with the other, carried him to the open window, and held him over the balcony, then said coldly to him, "If you do not ask my pardon, and withdraw your words, I shall let you drop."

The Marquis, in the grip of an adversary whom he knew to be thoroughly unrelenting, had nevertheless the audacity, or it may be the courage, to reply, "If you are acting, and do not intend to let me drop, you are a coward."

At that moment an old servant of Lucien's, who had made his way to the balcony, whispered something into his master's ear, whereupon Lucien instantly carried the Marquis back into the apartment and released his hold of him. Hardly was the Marquis upon his feet again before he sprang toward Lucien and dealt him a sharp blow in the face. To the surprise of those present Lucien Claveau offered no kind of response to the new insult, and the Marquis retired, saying, "To-morrow, wherever you please."

Madame Claveau, on awakening after her husband's departure, had been seized with fainting fits, and had become delirious. Claveau held a brief conversation with a couple of acquaintances, and then quitted the cafe in company with the old man who had been sent to look for him, drove with all speed home. In little more than half an hour he was at his wife's bedside; calmed by the sight of him, she slept. When she awoke in the middle of the night Claveau was still watching over her. After conversing affectionately with her for upward of an hour, she gradually dozed off again, and Claveau, so soon as she was sound asleep, stealthily left the house, and proceeded on foot to Bordeaux, to a rendezvous which he had arranged with two of his friends at the cafe, on the preceding afternoon.

He was first at the appointed spot, but had not long to wait, for his two seconds shortly afterward arrived, and, following close upon them, came the Marquis accompanied by his seconds.

During several minutes these two men fought with considerable ardor; they developed all their more cunning tricks, and each endeavored, in accordance with the approved rules of fence, neatly to spit the other upon the sword's point. While the engagement was thus proceeding, Lucien still pressing his adversary closely, said to him: "You gave me a blow yesterday with your fist; as yet I have not deigned to return it, but I intend doing so before I send you, as I shortly shall, to your last home." The pair were still in close conflict with each other, when Lucien rapidly passed his sword under his left arm, and at the same moment dealt the Marquis a violent blow in the face. Then regaining hold of his weapon, he assumed a defensive position before Lignano had time to recover himself, for the blow he had received had sent him reeling to the ground. This daring feat, the most audacious, perhaps, that has ever occurred in a duel, astonished the seconds. The Marquis was beside himself, and, in a fit of rage, sprang with raised sword upon Lucien Claveau, who calmly and confidently awaited the onslaught.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said he, "we are now quits."

The Marquis renewed his attacks again and again, but always to find himself foiled. Presently, by a rapid movement, Lucien disarmed the Marquis, then, thrusting his own sword downward, pinned him by his right foot to the ground. After a few seconds Lucien drew his sword out and handed the Marquis his own weapon.

The seconds came forward; Lignano made vain efforts to continue standing upon both feet. "It is useless," said the seconds to him, "it is quite impossible that you can go on." Glaring at his adversary with a savage expression, he said to him, "It is not over yet. I have still the chance of putting a bullet through your head."

The pistols were loaded. The impetuous Marquis, regardless of the pain he was enduring, bobbled along until he arived at the point where he was compelled to halt; he was then ten paces distant from Claveau, who had not advanced a single step, and who remained immovable while he received the Marquis' fire.

"It is now my turn," said he, and advancing five paces toward the Marquis, he deliberately took aim at him.

"Claveau," exclaimed one of the seconds, "this will never do; it is nothing less than murder."

Lucien turned round and faced him. "Look here," said he, pointing to a hole in his shirt at the shoulder, from which drops of blood were oozing, showing that his opponent's ball had taken effect. The next moment he fired, and the Marquis fell with his face to the ground. When they raised him he was dead; the ball had pierced his forhead and entered the brain.

Lucien, after having his wound dressed (it was but a graze), hastened back to his wife's bedside to find that, alarmed anew at his absence, she had relapsed. At night she was in the utmost danger. Next morning, while Claveau had gone to steal a few minutes rest in an adjacent chamber, a Commissary of Police arrived at the house to arrest him on information furnished by one of the Marquis' seconds. This new shock killed his wife. Lucien in the bitterness of his grief, threw himself upon her lifeless form, and was only removed from it with difficulty. Then, assuming an air of calmness, he said he was ready, and the next moment, as if by some sudden thought, seized one of a pair of pistols which were always kept loaded on the top of a small cabinet, and placing it to his ear, disposed with his own hand of the last of the Bordeaux duelists.

SAYINGS FROM MADAME SWETCHINE.—We are always looking into the future, but we see only the past.

The courage with which we have met past dangers is often our best security in the present.

Real sorrow is almost as difficult to discover as real poverty. An instinctive delicacy hides the rays of the one and the wounds of the other.

He who has never denied himself for the sake of giving has but glanced at the joys of charity. We owe our superfluity, and to be happy in the performance of our duty we must exceed it.

Let us ever exceed our appointed duties and keep within our lawful pleasures.

We expect everything and are prepared for nothing.

There are not good things enough in life to indemnify us for the neglect of a single duty.

We are rich only through what we give and poor only through what we refuse.

There is a transcendant power in example. We reform others unconsciously when we walk uprightly.

The inventory of my faith for this lower world is soon made out. I believe in Him who made it.

Situations are like skeins of thread. To make the most of them we need only to take them by the right end.

We deceive ourselves when we fancy that only weakness needs support. Strength needs it far more. A straw or a feather sustains itself long in the air.

Liberty has no actual rights which are not grateful upon justice. Her principal duty is to defend it.

The joy of the spirit is a delicate, sacred deposit, and must be kept in a pure casket, as an unholy breath will dim its lustre and fade its freshness.

Make no more vain resolutions, but proceed at once to duty. Know your weakness, trust and pray. God will help you through, and give you patience.

THE Indians, it is said, pronounce Iowa I o-wah, and it means "always home."